

Hon. Tim Bishop  
Five Minute Statement  
July 25, 2005  
*Iraq Watch*

Mr. Speaker, I rise with grave concerns about the situation in Iraq.

As I mentioned during a special order organized last week by the gentleman from Connecticut, Mr. Larson, the War in Iraq is the center-piece of the Administration's failed foreign policies.

The War in Iraq has proven to be a diversion from what should be our primary foreign policy focus – *winning* the Global War on Terror. Our preoccupation with Iraq is decimating our Armed Forces, which are now entrenched in a civil war where we do not belong.

The Administration's failure to measure progress in Iraq is matched by its broader foreign policy failures: North Korea and Iran present greater risks to our safety and security than when the President identified them as the axis-of-evil in his 2002 State of the Union.

Today, the situation in Iraq is a tragedy -- for America, for our brave troops in uniform, for the future of our nation, and for the prospect of Middle East peace, which fades every day we stay in Iraq, and as violence between Israel and Hezbollah continues.

Although 2006 was supposed to be a "year of significant transition," pursuant to last year's defense authorization law, we are no closer to finishing the year with any measure of positive transition than we were when the year started.

I call my colleagues' attention to a new book by Thomas E. Ricks, the Washington Post reporter, who appeared on Meet the Press yesterday to discuss "*Fiasco: The American Military Adventure in Iraq*."

As Mr. Ricks explained, the Administration's foresight and planning was as poor as its conduct of the post-war period. It's why, 3 ½ years later, we are still paying the price for such negligence and why 2006 is not on track to be the year of significant transition that not only we had hoped for, but that we must have.

Half-way through the year, these statistics show that we're moving backwards – away from our goal of handing Iraq over to a safe, secure, and stable democracy:

- There were 3,149 civilian deaths in the month of June. That's up from 1,978 in January.
- For the year, more than 14,000 have died in Iraq. That's an average of 2,400 a month. Another way of looking at that is every five weeks, as many Iraqi civilians die as we lost on September 11<sup>th</sup>.

The overwhelming majority of deaths have occurred in and around Baghdad. If the Iraqi police and Army can't provide security, is it any wonder that the Iraqi police have turned to the militias?

That's not a measure of progress. In any year, but particularly in a year of transition, that would be a turn for the worse.

Every day focusing on combating sectarian violence is another day and another dollar we divert from what should be our priorities -- increasing oil production, rebuilding infrastructure, promoting more dialogue between Sunnis and Shiites, and developing a long-term political solution for a stable, lasting democracy.

The Iraqi leadership isn't showing much progress either, particularly following remarks by Prime Minister al-Maliki and Speaker al-Mashhadani, who both openly condemned Israel in recent weeks.

Combined with the fact that nearly 50 percent of Iraqis support attacking our troops, Iraq is no closer to what the neo-conservatives envisioned as a partner for Israel who would catalyze change and bring about stability in the Middle East.

When the Prime Minister addresses a joint session of Congress tomorrow morning, I would hope he says the following:

- First, and most important, that Iraq is indebted to America for the sacrifice of its 2,550 sons and daughters;
- Second, that he regrets and retracts his comments about Israel;
- Third, that he is committed to routing terrorists, sectarian violence and corruption; and disarming the sectarian militias; and
- Fourth, that his government will honor the rights of ethnic and minority constituencies by re-visiting divisive sections of Iraq's constitution.

Still, Mr. Speaker, it will take much more to accomplish the long-term political goals necessary to restore stability, liberty and democracy – not only in Iraq but to a region suffering under the strain of so much violence and uncertainty.

But we have a long way to go. Reaching our objectives will be further down that path – as a result of the Administration's failures in the pre-invasion planning and conduct of the post-war period.

The tragedy of Iraq is perhaps the most solemn and vivid reminder of why a change in leadership is long overdue, and why America deserves a new direction in its foreign policy. I yield back the balance of my time.